



Making Recycled Yarns

by Lee Meredith

- ▶ turn old sweaters into new yarns
- ▶ how to use recycled yarns
- ▶ combining/adding to yarns
- ▶ spinning recycled yarns
- ▶ making self-stripping yarns
- ▶ Rejuvenation hat pattern

leethaknits.com

Remixed

This ebook is a part of the *Remixed* collection, which is all about making and using recycled yarns, with knit accessory designs meant to work well with those unique yarns, thanks to their flexible gauge and sizing.

If you want to learn more about *Remixed*, head to leethalknits.com, where you'll also find lots of other versatile patterns which will work well with recycled yarns.

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Making Recycled Yarns

I love rescuing wool sweaters from the thrift shop to turn into yarn, especially if they have holes or stains so I know they probably wouldn't have found a home. And if I'm lucky, I can get a sweater quantity of wool, or a wool blend (a little bit of angora is a common blend, or wool/cashmere blend if I'm *really* lucky) for under ten bucks!

Adding yarn-making to your knitter's skill set isn't meant to stop you from supporting your local yarn shops or buying indie-made yarns, but rather to allow you more opportunities to make projects you might not have been able to afford with quality fibers. Or just to add a fun new hobby to your crafty life.

Since there are so many different kinds of sweaters, and such variation in yarns, this book isn't so much a step-by-step how-to for making yarn, but rather a collection of examples, tips, ideas, and advice gathered from my years of experience making recycled yarns. There are plenty of step-by-step process photos and notes, but the specifics of the steps might need to be adjusted for your particular sweater recycling project. Read the basics, check out the examples, and take all that new knowledge into your yarn-making projects, creating your own unique recycled yarns!

Table of Contents

About Recycled Yarns	3
Picking Your Materials	4
Choosing a sweater that will work	4
Choosing a yarn that you like	6
Thrifted sweater specifics	7
Tools you'll need	7
Recycled Yarn Making Basics	8
Deconstructing a simple pullover	9
Turning the pieces into yarn	12
Finding your yardage	14
More Complex Sweaters	15
Complex cardigan	18
Colorwork sweater	20
Working with Recycled Yarns	21
Finding your weight	22
Some assorted notes	23
Splicing/joining ends	24
Using multiple yarns	25
Adding to your yarns	26
Triple-stranding as you knit	28
Spinning/Plying	29
Plying yarns without color changes	30
Plying striping yarns	31
Recycled art yarns	32
Chain/Navajo plying	33
More spun/plied examples	36
Partial Unraveling	37
Rejuvenation Pattern	39
Extra Notes & Links	42

About Recycled Yarns

Most of the time, commercial sweater yarns are made from multiple strands of finer yarns/threads held together. After having been knit into the sweater, worn and washed many times, then unraveled and rewashed by you, these strands will usually be stuck to each other a bit, so they won't want to come apart as you're knitting. But, since the strands aren't spun together, the stitch definition (for cables, lace, etc) may not be as strong as you like. It doesn't bother me, but it's a quality you can expect to see in your recycled yarns. (Not all, but probably most.)

Technically, you can pull apart these strands into individual yarns, but it's not recommended. This is because of how much extra time and work it is, and because the fine strands can break easily when separated, depending on the fiber content. But if you really want to, the *Extra Notes* page at the end goes into this a little.

Don't expect to get as much yardage as you'd need to knit a sweater the same size as the one you're unraveling. Machine-made sweaters are often knit at a looser gauge than hand-knit items, and you'll also lose some yardage in the recycling process. So, when planning, you can probably safely expect to get enough yardage to knit a smaller sweater than the one you're unraveling (for example, you could probably make a small to medium-size sweater out of the yarn from a large recycled sweater).

I like to make accessories out of recycled yarns, as I can get several hats, cowls, etc, or a big shawl, out of one sweater. Or consider unraveling two sweaters of the same weight to use in making a striped sweater, without worrying about running out.

If you have a spinning wheel, making recycled yarn is a really fun way to use it. Plying yarns together is easy to do while watching TV; you can even read subtitles while doing it, which I can't say about knitting!

You may have some never-worn sweaters buried in a drawer that you'd like to recycle, but most likely you'll head out to your local thrift shop in search of sweaters to take apart. Once you get into making recycled yarns, you'll start to think of thrift store shopping as yarn shopping, but you'll get to buy a sweater quantity of wool for a few bucks!

